

The Soft Pillow of God's Sovereignty

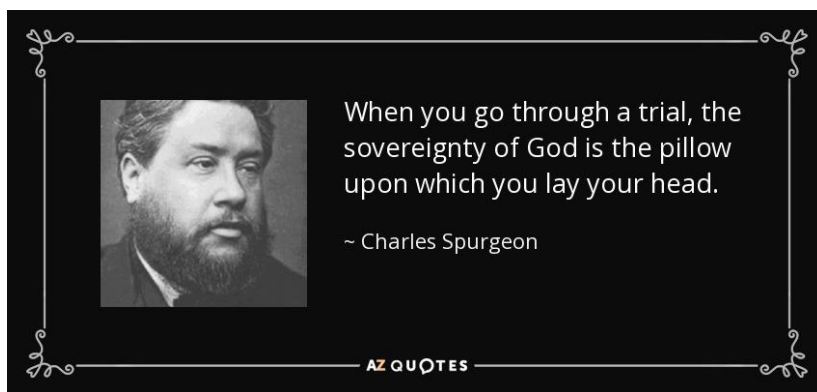
Pastor Kelly Sensenig

I was reading a pillow add on "My Pillow.com." The man made this sales pitch for his pillows. You probably have heard it. "Like all of you, I had problems sleeping. Pillows would go flat and I would flip flop all night long. I would wake up with a sore neck, a headache, or feel like I needed a nap, even though I slept 8 hours. When I invented



MyPillow, it took over two years to develop because I wanted it to have everything you could ever want in a pillow. I made sure you could adjust my patented fill so you could have the exact support you need as an individual, regardless of your sleep position. I also wanted a pillow that would last, so I made MyPillow machine washable and dryable. Guaranteed to be the Most Comfortable Pillow You'll Ever Own!"

This fellow sounds like a salesman! It's good to know that God is not a salesman, but at the same time He does promise to give us a soft pillow so we can find rest and peace in the midst of the storms and hard times in life. It's the soft pillow of God's sovereignty. This is what we want to study about in this Bible lesson.



We all need a soft pillow from time to time, a place of rest and comfort that can only come from knowing God, that He is all-wise, loving, merciful, kind, and in control over all the events of the world and our own personal lives.

A.W. Tozer said:

"Keep your heart with all diligence and God will look over the universe."

Psalm 33:11

“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”

We need to remember this when it comes to worrying about everything that is happening in our country. We must come to realize that God is in total control of what is happening worldwide as we approach the End Times.

The sovereignty of God is the Biblical teaching that God is the supreme authority and all things are under His control. God’s sovereignty and providence means that He is superintending and orchestrating all the events in the world and universe, including the events associated with our personal lives. This means that whatever happens to us, whenever it happens to us, or wherever it happens to us, we can be reassured as Christians that our loving, merciful, and all-wise God has allowed it to occur to fulfill His purposes for our lives.



In this study we are simply going to look at some verses on God’s sovereign ways and providential movements in the world and with God’s people to help us find rest and peace during the deterioration of our country of America and during the difficult times we face in our own lives. We must come face to face with God’s sovereignty during these changing times within our nation and with the difficulties that we might be passing through in connection with our own lives.



God wants us to find rest or peace in His purposes.

There are two ways we can rest in God’s purposes.

1. We must reflect on the character of God.

We will not accept God’s movement or ways in the world and with our own lives if

we do not accept who God is in His eternal being and unchanging character. In other words, we must study the doctrine of God to know God, so we might realize that whatever He allows to occur in our country and personal lives is in accordance with His character.

➤ God is if filled with perfect wisdom.

This means that God never makes mistakes! We must remember this when we are faced with calamities and trials, and when evildoers (communists) rise up in America to change our Christian heritage.

1 Timothy 1:17

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

“Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.”

Colossians 2:3

“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Romans 11:33

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

God decisions are unsearchable which means they are too deep for mortal minds to fully understand. The ways in which the Lord arranges creation, history, redemption, and brings about His providential acts are beyond our limited comprehension. They cannot be traced by our mortal minds!

“We are often tossed and driv’n
On the restless sea of time,
Somber skies and howling tempests
Oft succeed a bright sunshine.
In that land of perfect day,
When the mists have rolled away,
We will understand it better by and by.

By and by when the morning comes,
All the saints of God are gathered home,
We'll tell the story how we've overcome:
For we'll understand it better by and by."

- ✓ Have you ever doubted or questioned God?
- ✓ Have you second-guessed what God was doing?
- ✓ Have you wondered if God made a mistake?

Romans 9:20

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Since God is filled with infinite wisdom and knowledge, we can rest in His sovereign ways. We can discover that soft pillow that we need as we pass through changes and difficulties. We can realize that an all-wise God has ordained or determined everything to happen in relation to world events and my own life. I don't have to sit back and second guess who God is in His infinite wisdom as the Creator, Sustainer, and Overseer of the events of the world and universe – including what happens to my life.

- God is filled with mercy, grace, and love.

Remembering these character traits of God, knowing God in this way, will help us to peacefully pass through trials and tribulations that are related to God's sovereign purpose. I need the presence and peace that comes from a loving, gracious, and merciful God! He will never let me down. He is a caring God (1 Pet. 5:7) that will always be there for His children.

Exodus 34:6

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

Psalms 116:5

"Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful."

Psalm 57:1

“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.”

Romans 8:38-39 speaks of God’s love for His children:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers (*scanning the angelic world*), nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth (*scanning time and space*), nor any other creature (*scanning all living beings*), shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In other words, God is glued to us with an everlasting love!

Charles Spurgeon said:

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

The heart of God means that He loves you at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances! We do not always understand all the reasons for trials, but we can know and experience the Lord’s tremendous love that He has for us as we pass through them (1 John 3:1; Rom. 5:5).

➤ God is forever righteous and just.

Revelation 15:3

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.”

I don’t know how to really say it. There is amazing stuff that is ahead for God’s people! Amazing and wonderful! The heavenly choir was singing about God’s righteousness and justice is sometimes seen in bringing His vengeance upon evildoers in the world and nations who forget God during the seven-year Tribulation Period. Heaven acknowledged the sovereignty of God in bringing His righteous judgment against sinners and the entire world.

- ✓ Can we come to the place and acknowledge that God has the right to judge our nation?
- ✓ Are we totally devastated and depressed by what we see occurring in America today?
- ✓ Have we submitted to the sovereign movement of God in allowing the spread of socialism?

Revelation 16:7

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.”

Heaven recognized that God’s judgments of the future Tribulation Period are just and righteous. Whatever He chooses to do with the nations and wicked people is in accordance with His character of absolute justice and righteousness. We need to remember this as God gradually brings His judgment against America for her idleness and debauchery. Right now, it seems that God is sending a message to this country and it’s this: “What you sow is what you reap.” We have been sowing the sins of homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, abortion, atheism, and evolution for decades. They are now changing the genders of children (gendercide). Now, we are reaping what we have sown. We are reaping communistic atheists overtaking the government in absolute defiance against the Bible, the Judeo-Christian heritage, and the constitution which provides these rights and liberties for us.

Knowing who God is important if we are going to experience His soft pillow of rest and peace while we pass through difficult times, tragedies, and unwanted changes. We must believe in God’s righteous movements among the nations – even our nation. We must know that He is always a loving, merciful, and gracious God to us in spite of what is happening around us and with our lives.

Lorraine Boettner said:

“Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness, and love.”

Knowing God, His character, help us to accept His sovereign ways. Our first point dealt with reflecting on God’s character. If we cannot get past who God is (His character) we will not find the pillow of peace and rest for our lives. Unless you know God personally, the character of faithfulness, grace, mercy, love, justice,

righteousness, holiness, and vengeance, you cannot accept the sovereignty of God, which pertains to His movements among the world and your own life. The truth that God is indeed sovereign should be of immense comfort to us and a source of strength for us. It should cause us to experience rest and peace in our hearts and lives. In other words, we can discover the soft pillow that is associated with expressing faith in God's sovereign ways in the world and over our lives.

In the frigid waters around Greenland are countless icebergs, some little and some gigantic. If you'd observe them carefully, you'd notice that sometimes the small ice flows move in one direction while their massive counterparts flow in another. The explanation is simple. Surface winds drive the little ones, whereas the huge masses of ice are carried along by deep ocean currents.

Here is the application of this to our lives today. When we face trials and tragedies, it's helpful to see our lives as being subject to two forces—surface winds and ocean currents. The winds represent everything in life that is changeable, unpredictable, and distressing. But operating simultaneously with these surface gusts and gales is another force that's even more powerful. It is the sure undercurrent of God's movement, His wise and sovereign purposes, and the deep flow of His unchanging character of love, grace, and mercy.

2. We must reconfirm the course of God's actions.

Once we know who God is in His eternal being and unchanging character, it's only then we can come rest in what He allows to occur in the world and in relation to our lives.

Andrew Cuomo, current Governor of New York, said:

"I don't know why God did this (referring to the COVID-19 catastrophe). But it was a cruel and wicked thing that happened."

Here is a depraved man who knows nothing about God trying to give us a lesson on God! As always, He blames everyone else for his mistakes, even God! Of course, we know that the Chinese gave us this virus. They are



directly responsible for it, but God allowed it to occur in fulfillment of His righteous and perfect ways.

We now must reflect upon God's sovereign and providential movements among the world, nations and our own lives.

Psalm 75:4-7

"I said unto the fools (*those in Washington DC!*), Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high (*a symbol that signifies defiance, strutting, and self-confidence*): speak *not with a stiff neck* (*stubborn rebellion against God*). For promotion (*the ungodly exaltation of wicked people on earth and in Washington DC!*) *cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south* (*it comes from the north – the place of God's throne!*). But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."

I hope and pray that God will demote the communist leaders in our country! I hope he will put them down! But God is on the throne. He will do whatever He wants to do for such a time as this! The thought of this text of Scripture is very clear. God is the Supreme Ruler, humbling one person and exalting another in the world. In other words, He is the judge of the wicked, taking down one wicked person and promoting someone else in their place. The idea is that God lifts up (promotes) and puts down wicked people in the world according to His providential ways and purposes.

Albert Barnes remarks in this way:

"He is a sovereign, and he confers exaltation, whether of an individual or a nation, as He pleases."

God promotes and puts down. This is true in relation to establishing leaders over the earth and heads of nations, even wicked and communist leaders.

Romans 9:17

"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

Pharaoh and other wicked leaders rise on the world scene according to God's purposes. Behind the rule of wicked people is God's providential rule and ways

coming to pass in fallen world of sin. In fact, God may choose to raise up wicked leaders to bring His certain judgment upon wicked nations.

John Calvin said:

“When God wants to judge a nation, He gives them wicked rulers.”

God is in total charge of putting up and putting down kings or leaders – the good, the bad, and the ugly. The Bible is very clear on this matter.

Daniel 2:21 reveals the same truth:

“And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.”

God is overseeing the changing or both weather and world leaders. It’s not Mother Nature that changes the weather and it certainly is not Father Time that sets up and disposes world leaders. So when President Trump goes down and Biden goes up, we know that God in His sovereignty is at work. You might say, “But the devil was behind this communistic takeover of America.” I agree wholeheartedly. But the devil is not sovereign – God is sovereign. If America must reap communism in some form and way, then God is ultimately orchestrating and allowing it to occur, according to His sovereign plan and purpose.

Daniel 4:25 is another example of God’s sovereignty over rulers and nations. Speaking of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel records these words: “That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

Daniel 4:31

“While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.”

Essentially, God was saying from Heaven, “Nebuchadnezzar, I’m removing your sovereignty or rule from you.” And God could do it for He is the ultimate sovereign God ruling over the kingdoms of men! Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylonian Empire)

did what many of the Roman emperors did which was to proclaim himself as god and essentially say: "nobody is higher than I am." But Daniel says, "Dude, God is going to show you something different. You are going to be crawling. You are going to be eating grass like animals." And this is exactly what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. God humbles him and apparently, even Nebuchadnezzar responded at the end of his life to the sovereignty of God.

Daniel 4:34

"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation."

Daniel 5:21

"And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."

We need to remember that as a holy, just, righteous, and vengeful God, He knows how to take down both good leaders and wicked leaders. Perhaps He will take down the wicked leaders in our country. I don't what God's ultimate plan will be but it's not wrong to pray that He might replace wicked leaders with respectful leaders who acknowledge God, God-given sexuality, and that abortion is wrong. We can pray that our enemies might not triumph over us (Ps. 25:2).

Nahum 1:2 declares:

"God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies."

Psalms 94:1

"O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself."

Psalm 21:8-9

“Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.”

Psalm 31:15

“My times *are* in thy hand (God’s sovereignty): deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me” (God’s wrath).

Psalm 59:1-2

“Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.”

God will be the one who ultimately brings vengeance upon the wicked as His plan comes to fruition in a sinfully, deranged world.

Deuteronomy 32:41

“If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.”

Romans 12:19 is the New Testament counterpart:

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Daniel 2:44 reveals God’s vengeance against wicked kingdoms on earth:

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

Jeremiah 51:11 reveals God’s sovereign movement to remove Babylon as world power and replace it with the Medo-Persian Empire. “Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.”

God knows how to take down leaders and kingdoms. He has taken down all the previous world powers and leaders - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-persia, Greece, Rome and other great empires and peoples. He will also do it in the future when He establishes the Millennial Kingdom on planet earth (Rev. 20:1-7). This means that God knows how to judge America. This nation began with the desire to honor God, but America is going to have a sad ending like all other nations. We know this to be true from what the Bible teaches. After all, every nation will rebel against God and seek to defeat the returning Messiah at the Second Coming (Psalm 2; Rev. 16:14).

The perversions and departures from Christian values, morality, ethical norms, and the murder of untold millions of babies will result in the judgment of God. Here are some recent stats.

- ✓ More than 1.5 BILLION babies have been aborted worldwide in the past 50 years.
- ✓ An estimated 50 million abortions are carried out throughout the world every year.
- ✓ One in five pregnancies worldwide end in abortion.
- ✓ Approximately 90% of Down syndrome babies are aborted worldwide.
- ✓ 42% of all yearly deaths in the world are from abortion.
- ✓ Every two seconds a baby is aborted - every time your heartbeats a baby dies.
- ✓ Baby girls are a particular target of abortion: at least 100 million girls have already been wiped out through gendercide - the deliberate targeting of baby girls for abortion.
- ✓ In 2011 the Wall Street Journal reported that 163 MILLION babies were aborted simply because they were girls. They called it "The war against girls."

I don't like to say this, but God has every right to judge America. She has spit in God's face, defied Him and His ways, she has raised her fist up to Heaven and essentially said, "I America deserves what she gets. How fast and how much judgment God brings upon this country before the Rapture I cannot tell you. Only God knows this for He is sovereign.

I certainly do not want God's judgment to fall upon this nation for the sake of the local churches, my children and grandchildren, and the blessing that true freedom

brings into our lives. But God is not interested in what I think. He does not want my opinion on the matter. He did not ask what I think. He will bring His purpose to pass for this nation. It will happen in God's time and in God's way.

Amos 3:6

"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*?"

When an enemy invades a city and terrible calamities occur within the city (death, rape, stealing, etc.), God takes credit for that happening. Of course, this does not mean that God initiates evil by actually causing people to do evil and terrible things. God cannot do this because of His character of impeccable holiness and purity (Lev. 11:44; Hab. 1:13). However, God can orchestrate these types of events (wars, natural disasters, etc.) and make sure they occur within a fallen world of sinfulness in accordance with His sovereign purposes. Folks, once God's decision is made to bring judgment, the outcome is unavoidable. This is what we find repeated in Scripture. We cannot turn back the clock on God's judgment for America.

Now let's swing the pendulum in the opposite direction. Since God is righteous, holy, perfect, all-wise, merciful, loving, and unchanging God, Christians can be reassured that whatever He does or allows to come into our lives will be in accordance with His character and perfect plan for them.

God's has a general, sovereign purpose for all His children.

Romans 8:28-29

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God (*the providence of a sovereign God - suffering, sunshine, or stricken with a disease*) to them who are the called according to *his* purpose (*the plan of a sovereign God*). For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

What is Paul saying here? He is teaching that what God determined in eternity past (perfect conformity to Christ's character) is coming to pass gradually in our lives today (progressive sanctification and Christlikeness) and this will be ultimately and fully experienced at the Rapture. God's purposes of building character, conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28-30), and sometimes even curtailing sinful behavior through His chastisement (Heb. 12:6) to get us back to Christlikeness, can be seen in His acts of

sovereignty over our lives. We can be certain that nothing can happen to us without passing through God's permissive will, and that He can bring about good through it.

Of course, God also has His greater purposes occurring in the world and even in our own country today with the rise of socialism or communism. There is what I call the "never-ending circle of God's sovereignty" occurring in the world at large and in relation to each one of our lives as Christians. In other words, things don't just happen by chance, they happen by providence, God moving the events of the world and our lives according to His plans and purposes.

When we understand or KNOW who God is (His character) and what He is doing, we can then submit to His ways and rest in His sovereignty.

Psalm 46:10 states:

"Be still (*serenity*) and know that I *am* God (*sovereignty*): I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

You see, we cannot be at peace with God or with what is happening around us and with us, if we do not think correctly about God and His ordained purposes. We must know God personally and experientially in our lives, that He is a loving, merciful, gracious, holy, just, and righteous God if we are going to accept His works of sovereignty and providence in the world and with our own lives.

When we begin to think of God's amazing sovereignty, we find that all of His attributes come alive! Without His power, He would have no control. Without His goodness, mercy, grace, and love His sovereignty would be anything but comforting. Without God's infinite wisdom, His sovereignty could not be trusted. This is why we are called upon to "Be still and know God" (Ps. 46:10).

Proverbs 16:33 reveals:

"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing (verdict or decision) thereof is of the LORD."

During the days of the Old Testament and even up to the time of Pentecost, the casting of lots was a legitimate way of determining the will of God. The whole process seemed nothing more than a matter of chance, but the Lord overruled to

reveal His guidance. The writer of this Proverb uses this example to speak of God's sovereignty and overruling providence in the world. God is ultimately in control of the events of our lives. He allows things (both good and bad) to occur in relation to our lives. The whole disposing of our lives is somehow connected with God's workings and choices.

Proverbs 19:21 adds: "the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."

In Isaiah 46:10 God concludes speaks forth similar words:

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Have you ever made plans to go somewhere and look forward to doing it several months down the road? We all have done this. Of course, there is nothing wrong with making plans, but we must submit them to the Lord and His sovereign way over our lives – what He CHOOSES to bring to pass.

James 4:13-15 is also a constant reminder of God's sovereign ways over our lives: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

This is submitting to God's sovereignty. We come to the place where we give all our days, ways, and plans to the Lord and let Him have His way with us. Joseph bowed the knee to God's sovereignty and ways over his life. After being thrown in a pit by his brothers to die, he recognized the sovereign hand of God in all of it.

Genesis 50:19-20:

"And Joseph said unto them (*his brothers*), Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God. But as for you, ye thought evil against me (*throwing me in a pit to end my life*); but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Now think about this. The evil and wicked thing that occurred against Him was turned around by God to result in a blessing. From the human standpoint, Joseph got what we call a "shaft job" but from the divine viewpoint God turned the evil

episode around and did something wonderful in Joseph's life. You see, when we bow the knee to God's sovereignty, we can always know that God is ultimately moving to bring about something good for our lives (Rom. 8:28). We may not see it right away, but God is always moving to do something very wonderful in our lives.

Again, Psalm 46:10 says that we must be still and know God by surrendering to His providential and sovereign ways over our lives. We must "be still and know that he is God." Ron Hamilton wrote about knowing God better through learning to surrender to the Lord's ways over his life.

"What a privilege to come into God's presence
Just to linger with the One who set me free.
As I lift my eyes and see His awesome glory.
I remember who He is and bow the knee.
Bow the knee, Bow the knee
He is King of all the ages, Bow the knee,
God alone on His throne, See Him high and lifted up
And bow the knee.
Kneel before Him, All adore Him
As you live to love Him more, Bow the knee."

Beloved, believe in God's purpose for your life, let God be God, and find rest for your soul. Discover the soft pillow that God wants you to rest upon. When we reflect on God's awesome, sovereign providence we should experience reverence, security, freedom, and blessed peace.



"Blessed quietness, holy quietness
what assurance in my soul!
On the stormy sea He speaks peace to me
how the billows cease to roll!"

"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). There is a quiet understanding we can have with God and before God when by faith we bow the knee and surrender to God's sovereign and providential ways for our life. There is an inner stillness or rest

that we can experience when we learn to know God as our all-wise and loving God who always moves in a way that is best for our lives.

David Hocking said:

“To know God is the highest pursuit of life. To understand Him is to understand ourselves. To understand Him is to know what is happening. Not to understand Him is to remain in confusion and doubt.”

After a long day of hard work, sometimes you look forward to winding down and eventually turning in and getting a good night’s sleep. You are ready to put down your head on the soft pillow and sleep so you can be refreshed and revived for the next day. In a similar way, God wants us to rest our head on the pillow of His sovereignty and find rest for our souls. When we are filled with fear, when we are restless and weary in our journey because of the trials that befall our lives, we can find solace in the sovereignty of God. We can discover what Spurgeon referred to as the soft pillow of God’s sovereignty. In order to experience this soft pillow, we must what God said: “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). We must find rest from the distress by knowing God personally and providentially, expressing our faith in His perfect character and ways which He brings to pass.

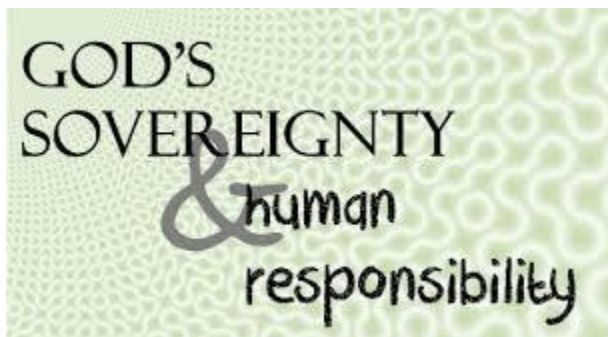
We are going to finish this study by deepening our understanding about God’s sovereignty. After all, if we do not understand and accept the workings of a sovereign God, we will not accept His ways over our lives, which might include sickness, suffering, and other serious troubles which inflict our lives.



Here is a little summary of the way God works.

- ❖ Sovereignty means God is in control.
- ❖ Predestination means God is in charge of how everything turns out.
- ❖ Wisdom means God makes no mistakes.
- ❖ Goodness means God has our best interests at heart.

We are reminded by this that God's workings align perfectly with who God is without undermining the character of God and His ways. God's sovereignty is a natural consequence of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. The sovereignty of God refers to the fact that God is in complete control of the universe. When we speak of the sovereignty of God, we mean He rules all the events of the universe, sometimes directly and other times indirectly. But God always has His hand on the compass, guiding and leading the events of the universe. As the sovereign God, He does not directly cause everything to happen, yet He does allow all that happens to happen. However, ultimately, God's will is going to be accomplished in everything that does happen.



Of course, a belief in God's sovereignty is different from fatalism, which denies human free will. Humans are able to make genuine choices that have real consequences (John 13:17; Luke 13:34). Nowhere in the Bible are we encouraged to be passive and do nothing. Instead, we are to engage with God and His ways (Isa. 1:18; 2 Chron. 7:14; Rev. 22:12). Nevertheless, God's will is always accomplished even through the instrumentality of human means and freedom of expression (Acts 2:23). God's sovereign ways and determined plans are never hindered through man's choices, whether for or against Him.

Beware of reading fatalism or that man's choices have nothing to do with God's sovereignty (God controlling the events of time and eternity). We can blame "God's will" for circumstances that are really the result of our own failures or laziness rather than taking the advice of Augustine, "Pray like everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you." God and His sovereignty work together with human choices. He doesn't bypass you. He doesn't eliminate you. He's very

much involved in your life, but you have to work in submission to Him to be truly blessed.

Fatalism says, “whatever will be will be” and does nothing. But Scripture does not teach that fatalism is the result of God’s sovereignty. There is a balance between God’s sovereignty (His determined plan) and free will (man’s choices). The same God who determined the end also determines the means to the end. God is not the controller of a bunch of little programmed robots, nor does God take a “hands off” approach to humanity by helplessly allowing things to run their course, like a train about to wreck, without being able to intervene in any way.

The sovereignty of God, that He is in control and involved in all the affairs of life, is very practical and has a significant impact. Allow me to highlight some practical aspects of God’s sovereignty.

First, the sovereignty of God impacts everyday life in that it removes all cause for His children to worry. In a general way, we can know that if God is in control of everything that occurs around us and with our own lives, we can know that our loving Father planned it to occur. Knowing that God always loves us and has planned a perfect course for our individual lives, should cause us to be freed from worry and anxiety. We can trust that God’s love, mercy, and grace will continue to overshadow our lives no matter what occurs. This in return will free us from anxiety and fear. Job declared that “he knoweth the way that I take” (Job 23:10) which means God prepared the path for Job, including His path of suffering. When we realize this, that our loving and all-wise God is in absolute control over the events of our lives, we can experience freedom from anxiety.

In a more specific way, we can also be freed from anxiety when we know God in His sovereignty will providentially care for us as His children.

Isaiah 43:2

“When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:34:

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow (don’t worry about tomorrow): for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.”

This is God’s social security program! In this same context of speaking about worry and anxiety, Jesus reminded His disciples of the kindness and God’s sovereign and providential care over our lives. God feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field and He will certainly care for His children (Matthew 6:26-30). In other words, God knows precisely what we need, and He has promised never to forsake us. As the sovereign God, He will providentially care for us every day of our lives. We need to recognize this general truth as we pass through the trials and changes of life. It will keep us from worry and anxiety. We need to retain our confidence in God’s sovereignty. We can always know that God will care for His own children no matter how far off track the rest of the world might seem to be going.

In summary, Jesus reminds us that the trouble we anticipate tomorrow may never materialize. God provides enough grace so we can deal with life one day at a time. Tomorrow He will provide enough grace (help) for what we will face then as we pass through “evil” or calamities that we face in life.

“One day at a time, sweet Jesus
That’s all I’m asking of You
Just give me the strength to do everyday
What I have to do
Yesterday’s gone, sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine
God help me today
Show me the way
One day at a time!”

Second, we can also know that everything that occurs in relation to God’s sovereign workings is for our good (Romans 8:28). Of course, the Bible does not say that everything that happens to us is good in and of itself, but that all things that happen are working together for our good. The sovereignty of God impacts everyday life in that we can trust that God wants to sanctify us and cause us to mature in our faith through His providential acts that He allows to occur around us and with us (Phil.

1:6). God's great, life-transforming master plan is in progress. He can bring good out of the evil things that happen to us. He brings glory out of suffering. He brings joy out of affliction.

Someone wrote:

"What if my struggle with anxiety and depression is drawn with the careful lines of God's hand? The very same hand that feeds me, holds me, disciplines, me, and loves me is working all things together for my good. Since this is true, why would I, like a foolish, impatient toddler, attempt to wiggle away from my Father's hand when He whispers to me, 'Peace, be still?'"

Third, God's sovereignty also enables us to make decisions without fear and failure.

One author explains it like this:

"The sovereignty of God also affects how we make decisions. We recognize that God is in control, so we need not be paralyzed by decision-making. If we make the wrong decision, all is not lost. We can trust in God's faithfulness and His ability to set us back on the right course. On a related note, we can and should make decisions. God's sovereign control does not mean that we sit idly by and allow life to happen. It means that we can go bravely into life, trusting that our loving Father sees the larger picture and is faithfully working everything together for His glory."

In other words, when we understand that God is in complete control, we are freed to live our lives without the fear of constant failure. We can trust that the God who loves us is fully able to express His love toward us in all ways and at all times, even when we make a wrong decision. Yes, we do reap what we sow (Gal. 6:8-9), but at the same time God can bring about His greater purposes for our lives even when we fail in life.

Fourth, the sovereignty of God means that we can trust in God's plan. Even when the world seems completely out of control, God is still in control. We can know when the events surrounding our lives seem to be spiraling out of control, that they are still under His control. God has the big picture covered, so we can trust Him with our daily details.

Psalm 20:7

"Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."

Fifth, a strong belief in God's sovereignty results in peace. This has been the greater focus of this study. God's sovereignty brings a stillness and tranquility into our hearts and lives. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). We must know God's movements in the world and in relation to our own lives. We must know that God is always just and righteous in His ways and what He allows to come into our lives. When we know who God is in His eternal being and character, we will bow the knee to His providential ways over our life.

Sixth, God's Sovereignty inspires us to worship him.

Psalm 24:1-2

"The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."

Psalm 145:3 expresses worship to God because of His sovereignty:

"Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness *is* unsearchable."

Let's look at God's sovereignty from a Biblical perspective.

2 Samuel 7:22 brings out the concept of God's sovereignty:

"Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears."

This expression "LORD God" (Jehovah God) is used no less than 300 times in the Old Testament. The shortened form of this divine name is "Yahweh" which was used by the Jews to express reverence for the only true God. This is the most frequent name used for God. It is a key name for God that expresses His sovereignty. The word Jehovah means that God is the self-existent and eternal God. The concept behind the expression "LORD God" is that He is the only true God and superpower and ruler over everything. He is the self-governing, independent, and only true God possessing supreme power in the universe, creating it, controlling it, orchestrating it, and guiding everything that happens.

God's sovereignty has four primary characteristics.

➤ God's Position

God's position means that He controls and rules over all things as the King. Isaiah declared that he had seen the king high and lifted up upon His throne (Isa. 6:5). God's Word reveals to us over and over again that God's position is the high King of Heaven and the universe, that His throne of rule is established in the heavens, and this position results in His powerful control of everything that occurs in the universe.

Psalm 103:19

"The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

Our God reigns! This is speaking of the universal kingdom of God's rule. It refers to what might be termed as the macrocosmic rule of God over all things of time and eternity. His kingdom or sphere of rule is universal in scope and entails all things that happen in the universe and with our own lives. Nothing is left out. God in some way is in control of all things that occur because He possesses the position of king over the universe and therefore rules over all things, including the small details of our daily lives.

Psalm 145:13 is similar:

"Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations."

Once again, this is referring to God's universal kingdom and rule over all things. His position as King with His "everlasting kingdom" (eternal and universal and sovereign rule over all things) is clearly seen in Scripture. Verses such as this portray God's sovereignty through His position of rulership over all things.

Herb Vander Lugt confirms this:

"Nothing in Heaven, on earth, or in the underworld is outside the scope of God's rule. Even the devil can only do what God permits (Job 1:12; 2:6). Moreover, it is God who provides rain and fruitful season (Lev. 26:4-5; Dt. 28:12; Isa. 30:23; Acts 14:17). He is the ultimate source of all that is good,, pleasant, just, and fair (ps. 34). And while He normally exercises His control through natural processes, He intervenes with obvious miracles whenever He chooses."

Whether by supernatural intervention or natural means, it makes little difference. God is always in complete control of all the events that transpire on earth and in the universe (space, time, and matter). God's sovereignty portrays that God reigns overall – everything that occurs in the universe. God's sovereignty speaks of His absolute rule and control over everything that occurs anywhere and at any time. The Hebrew word here for "kingdom" speaks of rule and dominion and suggests that God is in complete rule and control over all the events in the world, including the events associated with our own lives. With God there is no limitations imposed on Him from others. He rules as He pleases. God's ruling and control is so complete that there is no question about His absolute rule, and it should never be questioned.

“Who spread out the clouds before Him?
Who fashioned the earth with His hands?
Who created the starry host,
And formed the earth at His command?
Who scatters lightning before Him,
Commands the rain and snow to fall?
Who makes the nations tremble?
Who is Lord over all?

He is Almighty, Unchangeable God,
King of kings,
Lord of lords,
Robed in majesty.
He rules and reigns,
For all eternity,
Almighty, Unchangeable God.”

Daniel 4:35 asks this enduring question:

“And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

In other words, as the King, when God has ordained something to occur, we can do nothing about it but accept it and go on with our life. We should not think of questioning God and not accepting His purposes in relation to a fallen world and as He brings His purpose to fulfillment for our own individual lives.

Romans 9:20

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?”

We are once again reminded that God is the divine Potter and we are the clay. Without overriding human responsibility and actions, God is bringing His perfect plan to pass in a sinful world and with our own lives. He has ordained the path of our lives and we must remember that His ways are past finding out.

Romans 11:33

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

The Bible repeatedly teaches that God is ruling over and directing world events (Isa. 45:7), the choices of leaders (Prov. 21:1; Ezra 1:1-2), and those things that occur in connection with our own lives (Rom. 8:28). As the all-powerful King of Kings, everyone and everything (all events and actions of all times) are in some sense under His rulership, power, and control. When life seems to make no sense, remember that God has ordained the path of our lives. When we pass through deep trials, we must remember that God is King over our situations that we are facing, allowing them to occur for our good and His glory.

“High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.”

Isaiah 43:13

“Yea, before the day (*before the first day of creation when time began and throughout all periods of history God was at work!*) **was I am he** (*the eternal God*); **and there is none** (*no other idol*) **that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?”** (*no one or nothing shall turn back or reverse God’s ways and purposes and oppose or thwart His plans*).

God's actions are irreversible! These verses (Isaiah 43:11-13) form a magnificent celebration of the sovereignty of God. Jehovah or Yahweh was the only God that has existed from the very beginning. Since He is the only true God and deliverer, no other god (idol) can deliver His people or overrule His decisions. This means that it was foolish for the Israelites, as it is for all God's people today, to look to anyone or anything else for deliverance. In this context, the LORD calls Israel as His witnesses; they should testify that He is the only true God, that He is eternal, that besides Him there is no savior and Deliverer, and that His decrees and acts cannot be thwarted. God's purpose will come to pass even when man thinks he is in control. It's actually God that is in control. God is winning – not man!

Dr. J. Vernon McGee explains it like this:

“The very wonderful thing is that God is moving this universe according to His plan and purpose. The Greeks had a proverb: ‘The dice of the gods are loaded.’ Whether you like it or don't like it, God is saying to you, ‘Don't gamble with Me. Don't act as if I don't exist. You can play house as if I don't exist, as if this is your universe and you are going to work it out your way. But I want you to know that if you start gambling with Me, you will lose. You see, this is My universe, and I make the dice to come up My way, not your way. My dice are loaded—I already know how they are coming up, and you don't.’ The thing for us to do is to get in step with God.”

Of course, God does not gamble but His plan always comes to pass in His way and what He allows. Man is not in control – God is ultimately in control. Did you ever think that God should change what He is doing? It's futile to think this way since we cannot change God's plans and purpose for our own country and our lives. You might personally say, "But look what happened to me. Hey, I did not do anything to deserve what happened to me. I got fired. I was the best employee they had." How can we come to grips with God's sovereign way when something like this happens? We must conclude that God chose the best employee to get rid of!

The fact that God is directing everything (all events of all times) that occur on earth and with our own lives should provide us with comfort. We should experience the soft pillow of God's sovereignty or His peace when realizing that everything that occurs does so under the ruling hand of God or “the finger of God” (Exodus 8:19; Luke 11:20).

If we are going to find rest during the changes and difficult times in life, we must recommit ourselves to God's sovereignty. We must realize that God is an all-wise, loving, merciful, and gracious God bringing His grand purpose to pass for our lives. Unless we bow the knee to His sovereign purpose and plan, we will not find the soft pillow we need to rest our weary souls.

A story is told of a cowboy who goes to buy some life insurance. The broker asked him if he had any accidents in the past year, to which the cowboy replied "No. But I was kicked by a horse, chased by a raging bull and bitten by a snake - that laid me up for a while." The agent said, "Weren't they accidents?" To which the cowboy replied, "No, they did it on purpose." You see this cowboy realized that there are no such things as accidents.

In a similar way, we must remember that there are no accidents with our own lives – only divine appointments. Everything was planned by God. This is because of the sovereignty of God. As the sovereign God, He controls the events of our lives, while at the same time allowing us to express free will and our own choices. Believing in the sovereignty of God means that God has a plan and purpose for everything that we pass through and experience in our daily lives. We can know that He is in absolute charge of all the events of our lives - the big or small, difficult and easy, or the mundane and momentous changes that we pass through. He is also in charge of our future.

"I know who holds the future,
And He'll guide me with His hand;
With God things don't just happen,
Everything by Him is planned.
So as I face tomorrow,
With its problems large and small,
I'll trust the God of miracles,
Give to Him my all."

The fact that God is directing everything (all events of all times) that occur on earth and with our own lives should provide us with comfort. We should experience the soft pillow of God's sovereignty or His peace when realizing that everything that occurs does so under the ruling hand of God or "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19; Luke 11:20).

➤ God's Power

A second characteristic of sovereignty is power. As already mentioned, there is an inseparable link between God's position as King or ruler and His power. The sovereignty of God also envisions God as the superpower of the universe. The Bible teaches that God's power is seen at work in everything that is occurring in the world and our own personal lives. God's is all-powerful over leaders, angelic beings, and everything in the world and universe of space and time. As the all-powerful and mighty God, He brings His perfect plans to pass in the world and entire universe.

1 Samuel 2:6-8 brings out this description of God's sovereignty:

"The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them."

We discover in these broad and sweeping statements that God is ruling and overruling everything as the powerful and Almighty God, since He is the great Creator of the universe and everything that it in it! God has established the world so that it cannot be moved ("the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them"). All of these statements mean that whatever happens on our planet is under His watchful supervision, guidance and control of a great, big, wonderful God.

1 Timothy 6:15-16 also brings out this description and side of God's sovereignty:

"Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate (sovereign, supreme authority and power), the King of kings, and Lord of lords (supreme position and decision maker who requires submission); Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen."

The "only" Potentate or authority, might, and power emphasizes that no other force or power can frustrate God's purpose. God is in total charge of everything that occurs in the world and with the events associated with our own personal lives. This passage comes from many different vantage points but all of them declare the Lord's ultimate sovereignty over all things. No matter how much we might fuss

about God's sovereignty or misunderstand God's sovereignty, it is still true. The sooner we come to terms with God's absolute power, authority, control, and providence over all things (the carrying out and fulfillment of His sovereignty), the better off we will be in our Christian life.

God is not a passive bystander and observer of the events of human history. No, He is the Almighty God who is involved in everything, bringing it all to a wonderful and grand climax. From beginning to end, He is God, and is in complete control of everything that occurs on planet earth, in the universe, and with our personal lives.

Colossians 1:17 states: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Hebrews 1:3 also declares that He is "upholding all things by the word of his power." It is God's power that is behind His absolute control of everything, including the laws of gravity! Amazing! If God were not all-powerful this world and universe would explode into oblivion!

Sometimes we think that things are out of control but then we must remember about God's power and control over everything that occurs in the world and with our own lives. On some grand scale and spectacular and powerful way, God is controlling by His own power the events of history and our own lives. Although Satan is the prince of this world (John 14:30; 16:11), God is still on the throne and controls even the movements of Satan. There is a sense where God has the entire world in His hands.

Acts 17:24

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

God is Lord of both heaven and earth because He is in absolute control of what is occurring throughout the universe and will always bring His perfect plan to pass in everything that happens.

The African spiritual is true:

"He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole wide world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands."

He's got the wind and the rain in his hands.
He's got the wind and the rain in his hands.
He's got the wind and the rain in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the little bitty baby in his hands.
He's got the little bitty baby in his hands.
He's got the little bitty baby in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got you and me sister in his hands.
He's got you and me sister in his hands.
He's got you and me sister in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands."

The poem "Submission" was written by William Cowper (to whom depression was no stranger) is one of surrender to the sovereign hand of God. Yes, we can even surrender to a bout with suppression, realizing that God wants to teach something to us through these times. The poem ends with the reality and reminder that clouds may come again into one's life. But when they do, we can bring ourselves to thank God for the clouds which help us to renew our faith once more in the living God.

"O Lord, my best desire fulfill,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to Thy will,
And make Thy pleasure mine.

Why would I shrink at Thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears?
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

No, rather let me freely yield
What most I prize to Thee;
Who never hast a good withheld,
Or wilt withhold, from me.

Thy favor, all my journey through,
Thou art engaged to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of day,
And crush'd before the moth!

But ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still binds me to Thy sway;
Else the next cloud that veils the skies
Drives all these thoughts away.”

Beloved, nothing is outside the scope of God’s guiding hand of power and rulership, even the death of His own Son.

Acts 2:23

“Him (*Christ*), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (*God’s sovereignty*), ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (*man’s choices*).

Interwoven together are the choices of people, even wicked people, which are used and orchestrated by God to bring about His sovereign purposes. In this case, it involved the death of His Son to provide salvation for the world. Once again, God ordains the means as well as the end. He does this without overriding man’s choices. We see this in that God used wicked people to crucify His Son on the cross. He used and orchestrated their own expressions of evil choices, to bring about His saving purpose of the cross.

In Proverbs 16:4 demonstrates the amazing power of God at work in everything that occurs: “The LORD hath made all *things* for himself (His purpose and glory): yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

Notice, this text does not say that God made the wicked for the day of destruction, the Lake of Fire, or damnation in hell. Hell is only prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). The Bible is teaching that God made “all things for himself”

which means to serve His own purposes and promote His own glory and praise. Even the wicked are subservient to God's eternal purposes. God uses Hitler's, Stalin's, and serial Killers for His purposes! This verse informs us that God, in His own providential way, uses evil people and their wicked decisions and actions, represented by "the day of evil," to fulfill His own purposes (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). In other words, God allows the wicked to have their evil day in this world, so God, through the outward expression of their evil actions, can express His own purposes and glory.

Psalm 76:10 says:

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee (bring glory to God): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

God knows how to turn the tables on evil! God says that He lets man go only so far. He does "restrain" evil actions to a certain extent in this world. God has His limits on what man can do on this earth ("the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain"). God is still on the throne. The emphasis is on God's providential control over all things or doing things "after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). But here is an amazing revelation. Even man's wrath which is expressed against God is somehow turned around to bring praise to Him. For instance, a person's hostility toward God can result in a demonstration of God's power and the subsequent glorification of His name. Such was the case with Pharaoh (Exodus 11:9).

Romans 9:17

"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

Warren Wiersbe comments in this way:

"The more men rage against Him, the more God is glorified! The longer Pharaoh refused to submit to God, the more Egypt was destroyed and the more God was glorified (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:14-18)."

Of course, ultimately God is glorified through evil actions of evildoers because against the backdrop of evil and the blackness of sin God's holiness and righteousness shines all the more. The wrath of man shall bring praise to God. Amazing!

“The wrath of men shall praise Thee,
The rest shalt Thou restrain,
And out of earth’s disasters
Will bring eternal gain.
The purpose of man’s evil heart
Works out Thy sovereign will.
Our God is still upon the throne,
Therefore, believe, be still.
Be still and know that I am God,
This banishes our fears,
While passing through this scene of strife,
Of sorrow and of tears.
The One who rules the heavenly hosts
Holds all within His hand,
And none can say, “What does Thou?”
Or can His arm withstand.”

We again are reminded that God is in some sense ruling and overruling all that occurs in the world, even evil. Since He is the mighty and all-powerful God of eternity. God used Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17) and Judas (John 13:26-27) to bring about His purposes in the world without making them do evil. This is because the human heart needs no divine assistance to think about and carry out evil.

Herb Vander Lugt again states:

“An evil plan doesn’t originate from God, but He may allow or even intervene to bring about circumstances favorable to the execution of the plan – as long as it accomplished His purposes.

We cannot blame God for evil since God is not the originator or coconspirator of evil in the world (“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” – Hab. 1:13). However, God is all-powerful and can orchestrate the evil that is occurring in the world, the evil actions of mankind, and bring praise to Himself through the expression of evil. He does this by sometimes bringing His judgments against evil but also His character of impeccable holiness and righteousness is always brightly displayed against the backdrop of all evil, sin, and wickedness.



1 John 1:5 declares:

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

How can the actions of wicked people bring praise and glory to God? Think of it like this. All the wicked and wickedness in this world serves as a black backdrop, which allows the light

of God’s righteousness and purity to shine brightly, which in return actually glorifies God. Every time a wicked person reveals himself, God is praised, simply because His holiness, righteousness, and impeccability are magnified against the evil, wickedness, and sin.

Why does God allow evil? Ultimately it is to bring praise to Him as His holiness and righteousness are seen against the backdrop of sin and darkness. Of course, the Bible does not say God preprograms wicked and evil people like puppets to perform dastardly deeds. God does not make people sin (James 1:13), or create people to sin (Gen. 1:31), but He allows the course of their sinful lives to play into His overall sovereign plan, which will ultimately bring praise to God. God does not cause sinners to go deeper and deeper into degradation, but He permits them to do so. In the same way, God gives permission for the devil and his angels to bring about destructive crimes, wars, persecution, false religions, and sometimes even natural disasters. We must always remember that God’s permission is not the same as His causation (He is the direct cause of something).

Sometime in the past, God introduced or permitted sin and disorder to enter the world through Satan’s rebellion and Adam’s sin. The world as we know it today is under the curse that God pronounced at the dawn of human history (Gen. 3:17-19) which resulted in untold numbers of evil and sinful actions being propagated on others and diseases, deformities, and disasters occurring throughout the earth. God cursed man and the earth and therefore allowed the cycle of evil, sin, disease and disasters to be part of a fallen world of sin. However, God is never the direct instigator of evil actions of wicked people. He does not tempt them to do evil.

In summary, all evil, suffering, disease and death are the result of God's built-in cycle of judgment upon the human race. The world is filled with grief, pain, sorrow, cruelty, and injustice. We cannot deny what God has allowed to come upon the human race because of sin. Nevertheless, God is not the instigator of evil actions within the human race. He is not directly responsible for sin and evil in the sense that He tempts people to sin and commit unrighteous actions (Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8).

The point of all this is that the all-powerful and Almighty God is moving everything toward His intended goal and ultimately evil brings glory to God. Even the wicked and godless people will in some way bring praise and glory to God, both in this life, and the life to come. God's righteousness and holiness will be seen against the backdrop of such wickedness and sin and God will ultimately get the glory.

It's equally true, and even more difficult to understand and accept, that the punishment of unrepentant sinners, who express wrath against God, is also in keeping with God's character of justice (Rev. 16:7). God's punishment of sinners always reveals His righteous workings and justice (Rev. 19:2). God is a God of wrath and revenge. It's part of His eternal being and character.

Think of it. God could not be a God of absolute and pristine holiness if He was not also a God of wrath and justice. Therefore, even the future punishment of the wicked and unsaved will in one sense glorify God's character of justice and righteousness. The "Lord hath made all things for himself" (Prov. 16:4) or God has in His own providence, allowed every past, present, and future event, even the judgment of lost sinners, to bring glory to His name. And throughout eternity we will sing, in spite of wicked people burning in Hell, "Glory to His name."

Here is the practical point of all this. We can find God's soft pillow or the rest that comes from realizing and accepting, by faith, the superintending power of God over all things, including the details of our own lives. This would include evil injustices which we experience. We can always know God is in control when it seems that life is spinning out of control. This brings us to our next point.

When I was a younger boy, there was a game called "Battling Tops." I had to have this game. I could not live without it. So, it showed up under the Christmas tree. The game consisted of several players winding a string around a top and then

unleashing it inside the circle area. It would spin and spin and hit other spinning tops trying to force them outside the circle. It was a neat game. When I think of these spinning tops, I sometimes relate them to how many of God's people are spinning around and around and are in turmoil.

Why? It's because they have not discovered the soft pillow of God's sovereignty, that He is the all-powerful God that is moving everything, all the events of the universe and our personal lives, according to His perfect plan. When we know God's character, we can accept His ways, and we can be reassured and quieted in our inner soul. We can know that He always does what is right and that everything is under His powerful control. This can bring rest to our weary souls. This brings us to our next point in describing God's sovereignty.

➤ God's Providence

The next characteristic of sovereignty is providence. Providence speaks of the all-wise administration or bringing to pass of the decrees of God. In other words, God is involved in some way in everything that comes to pass in the world and directs all things to their appointed end. God's decree ordains things that shall happen, but God's providence orders these decrees to come to pass in His perfect ways and timing.

The word providence is taken from the Latin, and by its etymology means foresight, not merely in the sense of seeing beforehand, but in the sense of taking care of the future by the complete ordering of all things and events which follow a pre-determined and intelligent plan.

Leonard Woods said:

"The doctrine of divine Providence is that all things are sustained, directed, and controlled by God."

Tony Evans speaks of providence in this way:

"Providence is the hand of God in the glove of history. It is God sitting behind the steering wheel of time. Providence refers to God's governance of all events so as to direct them toward an end. It is God taking what you and I would call luck, chance, mistakes, happenstance and stitching them into achieving His program."

The sovereignty of God is not only talking about His powerful control of all things, but also His providential movement. Providence or oversight means that God is involved in the affairs of the world, even the little things, which includes providing the needs of His children. Those things which seem accidental or insignificant in our lives have been purposed by God. Furthermore, God's children have a special providential protection and provision which comes from the Lord's gracious hand. So under this point, we need to address the subject of God's providence or His oversight and superintendence over all things that occur.

First, we know that God is providentially moving in a general way over the events of the universe (Ps. 103:19), physical world (Job 37:5), creation (Ps. 104:21), the affairs of nations (Acts 17:26), man's birth, death, and lot in life (Gal. 1:15-16; Job 14:5; Ps. 90:10; 139), the outward successes and failures of people's lives (Ps. 75:6-9; Luke 1:52), and the exposure and punishment of the wicked (Ps. 7:12-13; 11:6).

Job 14:5 declares this about a person's life and death:

"Seeing his days *are* determined, the number of his months *are* with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

This is speaking about man's lifespan on earth and the timing of His death. We will die in accordance with God's set time. God's providence or movement among mankind is seen in that He has planned and purposed death for each individual. God has certain boundaries set over a person's life, death being one of them, a boundary which no person can bypass or change. We will not live one second more than God has decreed or ordained in His eternal plan. We need to remember this and submit to God's timing regarding our death and departure from this life.

Nahum 1:3 records God's providence in weather-related incidents:

"The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet."

The fact that God has His way in the hurricanes and storms and the movement of the clouds means that He is in complete control of their development and movements.

Jonah 1:4

“But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”

This reminds us that God is sovereign over the weather patterns throughout the world. He is in control of all the weather-related events occurring on the earth whether they are tsunamis or earthquakes (Rev. 6:12). There are times God may allow Satan to interfere with the weather but even God is ultimately in control of these events (Job 1:16-19). An examination of Scripture reveals that whatever influence Satan and his demon angels have over the weather is restricted by God's ultimate sovereignty.

We can conclude that if Satan could impact the weather, it would only be by God's permission, and restrained, as in the case of Job. Satan was allowed by God to torment Job in order to test him, and this included “the fire of God” (probably lightning) which fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants (Job 1:16). This was followed by a “mighty wind” (possibly a tornado) that destroyed his oldest son's home and killed Job's children (Job 1:18-19). It seems that the fire from heaven and the tornado were somehow caused by Satan, but they were still under the ultimate control of God for His purposes.

- ✓ It is God, not Satan, who controls the weather (Exodus 9:29; Psalm 135:6-7; Jeremiah 10:13).
- ✓ God controls the skies and the rain (Psalm 77:16-19).
- ✓ God controls the wind (Mark 4:35-41; Jeremiah 51:16).
- ✓ God upholds and sustains the universe (Hebrews 1:3).
- ✓ God has power over the clouds (Job 37:11-12, 16).
- ✓ God has power over lightning (Psalm 18:14).
- ✓ God has power over all nature (Job 26).

So, it is not Mother Nature but God that brings about weather changes throughout planet earth. Man in defiance against God makes up names to replace God and do away with God in the world.

In a general way we see God's providential movement throughout the earth and universe. But secondarily, God is also moving in a special way in the lives of His children by caring for them and providing their needs.

Someone said:

“The only thing we know about the future is that the providence of God will be up before dawn.”

The words of Jesus in Matthew 10:29-31 speak of God’s providential care over the lives of His children: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

The Bible says God takes personal interest in His creation and a sparrow never falls on the ground and dies “without your Father” which means without God’s providential timing, plan, will, concern, and care over His creatures. The Father attends the funeral of every single sparrow!

Jesus is comparing sparrows to his own children. He is teaching that the Father is interested in the very small and insignificant things of our lives and His caring providence is seen in every detail of the lives of His children. We often think that God cares only for the big things in our lives and is unconcerned about the details. But Jesus taught the opposite. God’s concern with details should give us confidence that He controls all the affairs of our lives and wants to care for our needs.

Why does Jesus also remind us about hair loss? It’s not to bug us about hair loss but to remind us again that He is providentially involved in every area of our lives. In other words, God allows our lives to follow a pattern which He has ordained to come to pass. Furthermore, He reassures us that as He providentially cares for the little birds, so He will care for His children. If God cares about the little things (sparrows; the number of the hairs of your head), then He surely cares about His people and therefore should not be overcome with fear and anxiety.

John Blanchard remarked:

"The same God Who controls the sun cares for the sparrow, which begs this question...Why should we be so anxious and fearful about what tomorrow holds, when we know the One Who holds tomorrow?"

This is utterly amazing! God providentially controls the timing and circumstances of insignificant events such as the death of a sparrow and the number hairs on our heads. In other words, divine providence governs even the smallest details and

even the most mundane matters and suggests that God is uniquely interested in every detail of our lives.

The significance of Lord's detailed providence is not mentioned to impress us but to remind us that God cares for us deeply and wants to meet all our needs, even the smallest ones. Think of this. If God takes notice of such mundane things as sparrows and hairs, we can be sure He is concerned about all the physical and spiritual matters of our lives and wants to experience His caring help and provision for our lives. There is something unique about the Father's love for His children. It is something very special. We need to appreciate the depth and tenderness of His providential care and love over our lives.

There are many Scriptural references to God's caring providence over the lives of His children.

❖ The protection of the righteous is an act of loving providence.

Psalm 4:8

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety."

Psalm 91:1

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

I think we need to remember this when considering our current virus epidemic. We need to place ourselves once again into the keeping care of God's provision. If we do not, we can alter our lives to such a degree that we no longer trust in God or will remain faithful to Him.

❖ Supplying the needs of His people is an act of God's caring providence.

Philippians 4:19

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

God's superintending providence over the lives of His children is seen to extend to His loving and merciful care over their lives.

“It matters to him about you
Your heartaches your sorrow he shares.
Regardless of what you may do
He wants you He loves you, he cares.
Oh yes, it matters to him about you
Believe it because it is true.
Cling to his hand, He'll understand
For it matters to Him about you.”

- ❖ The answers to our prayers are also attributed to the loving response of God's providence.

Matthew 7:7

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Beloved, through the centuries of human existence God's saints have been taken great comfort in the fact of God's guiding and loving providence. The doctrine of the providence of God is strengthening, stabilizing, and tranquilizing! It provides us with a soft pillow to rest our souls when we realize that God has allowed all things to occur within our lives to bring about His greater purposes, and that He cares about all the details of our lives.

“While providence supports,
Let saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears all nature up
Shall guide His children well.”

William Cowper again wrote these words which help us to grasp God's loving providence over our lives.

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

Reportedly this is the last hymn William Cowper ever wrote, and here is the story that is said to be behind it. As mentioned previously, Cowper often struggled with depression and doubt. One night he decided to commit suicide by drowning himself. He called a cab and told the driver to take him to the Thames River. However, thick fog came down and prevented them from finding the river. After driving around lost for a while, the cabby finally stopped and let Cowper out. To Cowper’s surprise, he found himself on his own doorstep: God had sent the fog to keep him from killing himself. We are reminded that even in our blackest moments, God watches over us. Yes, whether this story is true or not, in either case we can rest assured that our God ever watches over us dear, tried, and afflicted saints.

Someone said:

“Providence makes all of life a miracle!”

This is true when we consider how God is always moving and directing the events of our lives to fulfill His purpose. God's decrees always come to pass in our lives.

The theologian Strong says:

"By the decrees of God we mean that eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, past, present, and future."

In a theological study on the doctrine of God, I concluded:

"God is ultimately in full control of everything that happens (Jer. 10:23; Rom. 9:16) and His decrees always come to pass (Prov. 21:30; Acts 4:27-28). He does some things *efficaciously* or directly (Gen. 19:24; Matt. 5:45) while allowing other things to occur *permissively* (James 1:13).

God as our Master is providentially interweaving the seemingly disconnecting strands of circumstances and events of each of our lives in a way that is often difficult for us to perceive. But everything that occurs is part of the providential, perfect plan of the Master. The Master who is in control of the waves of the sea is also in control of the events of our lives.

Nothing happens without God's approval and nothing occurs in our lives which He has not allowed through His efficacious (direct) and permissive (indirect) decrees such as our mistakes, bad decisions, wrong directional choices, and following temptation. Again, the truth about God's sovereignty is not fatalism, nor does it cancel out free will. However, it does settle our souls when we recognize that God is moving all the events of our lives to fulfill His purposes and that He deeply cares for us as His children.

Discovering the soft pillow of God's sovereignty is linked to His providence over our lives, which means He is directing the events that come into our lives, while at the same time caring for us in a way that brings calmness of heart and soul. So, we might conclude every morning and evening with these words: "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side!"

Sometimes we look at the wrong side of the carpet and miss the beautiful work of God's providence in our life. Spurgeon gave this illustration. "I think it was Mrs. Hannah More who says that she went into a place where they were manufacturing a carpet. She said, 'There is no beauty there.'

The man said, 'It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw.'

'Why, here is a piece hanging out, and it is all in disorder.'

'Do you know why, ma'am? You are looking at the wrong side of the carpet!'"

Sometimes we look at the wrong side of the carpet. We fail to see the beauty of God's hand of providence in what is occurring in our lives. God's providence in relation to His children's lives can be summarized in this way. Whatever events God ordains and allows to enter our lives, He is always a good, loving, merciful, and gracious God who wants to meet our deepest longings and needs.

When we face trials and opposition in our service for the Lord, we should trust Him to protect us by His providence and to work out His sovereign plan for our lives. God's providence means that He is superintending all the events of our lives while at the same time caring deeply about us and wanting to bring about His greater purposes in our lives.

Remember that God's providence relates to His superintending movement, oversight, and care of His children. With this in mind, there are five practical benefits we receive from the doctrine of divine providence.

A. Providence frees us from a heart of bitterness.

Genesis 50:19-20 is worth repeating in this study:

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive."

We have mentioned this verse already in our study, but it is very important to remember that whatever happens to us, we are always in the place of God. Do we believe that we are in the place of God when we face hard times, feel the effects of evil people, and pass-through persecution for our faith? God's part in what happened is not always detectable at the time, but we know that He is behind the scenes.

If ever there was a man that had the right to get even it was Joseph. His brothers left him to die in a pit. However, Joseph saw the providence of God behind the whole ordeal. Sometimes we get bitter because we doubt God's goodness and we don't see His invisible hand at work in our lives. We sometimes think God is not involved in our situation. This is why we get angry and try to get even and hurt the person who has hurt us. But if we really believe that an all-wise, great, big, wonderful God is at work in every situation, we can just stand back and let God do whatever He wants to do. The doctrine of providence, His oversight of our lives, frees us from bitterness.

B. Providence helps us to experience contentment in life.

Philippians 4:11-13

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased (*have the bare necessities of life*), and I know how to abound (*have more given to him at a particular time than his immediate needs required*): every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The providence of God working in relation to our life and possessing the strength of Jesus Christ is the source of contentment. Paul passed through many different changes in life. Sometimes he had only the bare necessities of life and was hungry while at other times he had plenty of food and more than he needed. No matter what changes Paul passed through, he was confident that he was in the will of God. He knew that wherever he was, or in whatever circumstances he found himself, he was there by divine appointment. As a result, he found real contentment in life.

Instead of worrying about our changing state and situations, we can find contentment knowing that God is in control of everything that happens. Contentment is the opposite of worry. When we have a bad day and things do not go right, as we planned, instead of becoming filled with frustration and anxiety, we can rest in God's sovereignty over every situation. Remember that nothing happens without God's approval and plan. Even the mundane things we pass through have a purpose.

How can we be truly content in whatever state and situation that we pass through in life? The only real answer is to accept that the providence of God is always at work in our lives, that His plan is coming to pass, which sometimes included hard and difficult times. The providence of an all-wise and loving God reassures us that He is not only in control of the events of our lives, but that He is also capable of giving us mercy and grace to go on in life.

C. Providence gives us a new perspective on our tragedies.

Malachi 3:6 says: “For I *am* the LORD, I change not.” When it comes to providence, we must remind ourselves that God, who is unchanging in His eternal character of perfection, wisdom, and righteousness, is sovereign over the worst and most difficult moments that we face in life. This is our new perspective on life when we embrace the doctrine of God’s providence.

We often ask questions: “Why did this happen to me?” “Why did my wife become sick?” “Why did I lose my life’s entire savings?” “Why didn’t God intervene when we were being abused as young children?” “Why have I lost my baby?” Most of the time we are simply left to wonder why these things happen to us, not knowing the exact reasons, other than God is making us more into the likeness of His Son through all the events of life (Rom. 8:28-30). But beyond this, we do not really have any specific answers. Therefore, it’s very crucial that we understand the providential acts of God as coming from a God “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) and our God who always does what is right (Gen. 18:25 – Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?).

God does not tell us everything we would like to know about the mysteries of life, but His providence also reassures us that He is there and that He cares for us in every situation (Ps. 34:18; 103:13). Providence leads us to believe that we can know God is somehow involved in our darkest moments in a way we cannot see, and probably would not understand, even if we could see it. However, because of God’s perfect providential ways, we can keep believing in Him even in the face of many unanswered questions. In fact, through the Lord’s providential care, He can bear the burden of all our unanswered questions (1 Pet. 5:7).

D. Providence gives us courage to keep going in hard times.

Joshua 1:6

“Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.”

Joshua needed to find courage in the providence of God over his life. He needed to trust in the plan of God to enter the Promised Land. We can find God’s courage in the providential acts of God, whether they are good, rewarding, bad, or evil. Somehow, when we know that our great God is at work in every situation, we can be encouraged to accept the different phases of life that we pass through, knowing that God is in charge and will enable us to pass through deep waters and rise above the trials of life.

Because God is always with us, we know that He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7), even when life is tumbling in all around us. But we also know that God is good in His eternal being which means that He cannot do anything that was designed to harm our spiritual lives and relationship with Him.

There is an old phrase that says: “Life is hard but God is good.” Yes, God is always good. The fact that God is always good in spite of what He allows to happen can give us courage to go on in life and get on the other side of difficult days and hard times.

Exodus 34:6

“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”

Psalms 145:9

“The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.”

Psalms 34:8

“O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.”

Oswald chambers observed:

“The root of all sin is in the suspicion that God is not good.”

God is always good even when things occur in our lives which are not good. God is still good in every situation that we face and at all times. Understanding the

providential acts of a good and gracious God gives me courage to go on life. Life is not without purpose and meaning. Things do not just happen randomly. God is on the throne and in charge of what He allows to occur in our lives to bring about His purposes with our lives. This provides us with hope and encouragement as we face difficult times. However, we must admit that God's providence does not answer every question, it doesn't make our problems go away, and it doesn't give us an easy road.

Ray Prichard said this about God's providence:

"But it (providence) does tell us that there is a pattern to the seemingly random events of life and that God is designing something beautiful out of that which now seems to be only a chaos of clashing colors. Life is hard—make no mistake about that, but God is good. Both those statements are true all the time for all of God's children."

The fact that God is in charge and is always good provides us with courage and encouragement to go in life despite difficult times and setbacks.

E. Providence forces us to choose faith over fate.

Psalm 56:11

"In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

We are not called to keep a stiff upper lip out of some hazy concept of fate; rather, we can rejoice because God is in control over everything. Sometimes we say, "What rotten luck I've been having lately!" "I'm having a bad day!" "Oh, well, whatever will be will be, and there's nothing that we can do about it!" ("Que Sera, Sera" = "What will be, will be!") You've probably heard people say all of the above. But perhaps you have said or thought something similar yourself at times.

Of course, all of the above declarations are at odds with Biblical truth, because each statement goes against the truth of God's providence. There is no such thing as luck or pure chance. If we have a bad day, it is because the Lord ordained these circumstances for our benefit. Bad days don't just happen! "Whatever will be will be" reflects a view of our circumstances as being caused by impersonal fate or blind chance which has no purpose or reason.

The Bible often teaches and illustrates the doctrine of God's providence (oversight of our lives) and it should be a source of great comfort and instruction for every believer. It means that God is not distant, passive, or unconcerned with the daily events in our lives. Rather, as our loving and caring Heavenly Father, He actively governs the daily events of our lives, usually behind the scenes, without in any way robbing us of the duty of making responsible choices.

Deists deny God's providence by asserting that He created the world, but He is no longer actively involved in it. Others say that God is active in the events of the world, but that He is not sovereign over evil. Rather, evil is the result of free will. But the Bible teaches that God is actively controlling or directing even evil events and evil people in such a way as to accomplish His sovereign will, and yet He is not the author of evil and is not responsible for it (Eph. 1:11).

Every Christian must understand that faith is a choice, not a feeling. There are times we may not feel like believing in God's providential ways. But faith is a personal choice we make to believe that God is always good and that He can be trusted in every situation. Faith rises above feelings and chooses to believe in the God who is always right, good, and filled with infinite wisdom as He works out His ways in the world and with our own personal lives. Our circumstances may argue against the reality of this, but nonetheless God is

Psalm 25:2

"O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

He Maketh No Mistake

By A M Overton

"My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache
But in my soul I'm glad I know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.

Tho' night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break,
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,
He made not one mistake."

Someone wrote:

"In the end, this will be the testimony of every child of God. Until the eternal morning comes and the sunlight of God's presence fills our faces, we move on through the twilight still believing that though life is hard, God is good. When we finally get to heaven, we'll look back over the pathway of life and see that through all the twists and turns and seeming detours that 'He made not one mistake.' Until that morning comes and the sunlight of God's presence fills our faces, we move on through the twilight still believing that though life is hard, God is good. And in the end we will say with all the children of God as we look back on our earthly pilgrimage, 'He made not one mistake.'"

Beloved, our lives must be governed by faith in God's providence – not fate or chance. We do not pass through life on the basis of luck or chance. We live the Christian life by faith.

"Though billows roll,
He keeps my soul,
My Heavenly Father watches over me."

Faith in the providence of God keeps our feet on stable ground and maintains our spiritual sanity during changing and difficult seasons of our lives. The truth of providence takes fate or chance out of the lives of God's people. There is no such

thing as blind fate or chance — but there is a providence (God’s providence) which guides and governs the world and everything in connection with our lives.

Charles Spurgeon explains the difference between fate and providence:

“Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just an arrow shot from a bow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; He had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when He marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.”

Proverbs 16:33 once again states:

“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing (verdict and choice) thereof *is* of the LORD.”

Providence is God's ordering of all the outcomes and events of things occurring in the world and our personal lives, after the counsel of his will, and for His own glory. At the same time, it included His constant watch care and provision over our lives.

Thomas Watson said:

“God is to be trusted when his providences seem to run contrary to his promises.”

One of the most famous documents in American history is the Declaration of Independence. Our forefathers signed that great statement setting forth the reasons they felt God was leading them to establish a new nation upon this continent. Do you remember the closing words? “For the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

Many of you remember Wendy Welch, who was here for many years, and the experiences of pain and sorrow that he went through -- how his legs became diseased and had to be amputated, and how, at last, the disease took his life. Just before he died he wrote this testimony, which I read at his funeral:

Wendy Welch

“I asked the Lord to heal me and to make me whole,
But he lamed me to teach me humility.
I asked Him to make me rich,
But he impoverished me to teach me to trust Him.
I asked Him to let me run my life and do His wishes tomorrow,
But he admonished me that there may never be a tomorrow.
I asked Him to let me enjoy the sin of pride in material things,
But he took them away to make me dependent upon Him alone.
He gave me nothing that I asked for, and everything that I wanted.
I have no choice but to trust Him with everything, from now to eternity.”

There are not such things as chance accidents but only God’s incidents! The providence of an all-wise and loving God enables us to possess faith in God’s perfect ways and purposes. Instead of living by fate, we can live and walk by faith when we understand and accept who God is in His eternal character and that His ways are always right and perfect. “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).

Our disappointments are His appointments. God is behind the scenes and controls the scenes He is behind. Faith in the reality of God’s providence enables us to maintain our spiritual outlook on life and brings us to the place of acceptance.

“Many things about tomorrow
I don't seem to understand.
But I know who holds tomorrow
And I know who holds my hand.”

Spurgeon once again writes:

“How sweet is providence to a child of God, when he can reflect upon it! He can look out into this world, and say, “However great my troubles, they are not so great as my Father’s power; however difficult may be my circumstances, yet all things around me are working together for good...There is no sweeter pillow than providence; and when providence seems adverse, believe it still, lay it under your head, for depend upon it there is comfort in its bosom. There is hope for you, child of God!”

➤ God’s Pleasure

Associated with the sovereignty of God is also His own pleasure. This is yet another characteristic of God's sovereignty.

Psalm 115:3

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

We see in this Bible verse that God's own pleasure is the basis for His sovereign acts and ways. God's sovereignty is tied to His own pleasure. What is pleasing to God means that whatever God chooses to do, it brings delight to Him. It fully pleases Him for His plans are perfect and become a way to bring glory to Himself.

Psalm 135:6

"Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

In other words, whatever God does, it is because He wants to do it. God is doing whatever He wants to do, and He is doing all of it for His own pleasure.

While preaching at a funeral, I mentioned how through a particular man's life and death that God would ultimately bring glory to Himself. After the funeral, an unsaved man approached me and said, "If God wants to get all the glory then God is selfish." I immediately answered the man by saying, "God cannot be selfish for He is perfectly righteous and holy in His eternal being and deserves all the glory for giving both physical and eternal life to the man who was deceased." Beloved, God's glory and pleasure is at the very center of all heavenly worship.

Revelation 4:11

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

All of Heaven worships the great, sovereign God reverberating throughout the heavenly sphere that He created everything for His own pleasure. God's creation brings Him great delight and satisfaction for it magnifies His eternal being and Godhead (Rom. 1:20).

Ephesians 1:11 states something similar regarding God's saving purpose:
"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

God's pleasure and the counsel of His perfect will are inseparably linked together in the expression of God's sovereignty. What God plans comes to pass and it is for His own pleasure and glory ("unto the praise of his glory" – Eph. 1:14). This is the ultimate purpose and expression of God's sovereignty. God is pleased with whatever He does and allows to occur within the universe and in the end, He always gets the glory.

It's time to summarize. God's sovereignty reveals to us that He possesses the high *position* as King ruling over all the events of history and time. He has total control over the past, present, and future. This is because God is the ultimate *power* of the universe. Through His guiding *providence* everything occurs which God intends to happen, and all that occurs is for His own *pleasure* and glory.

The sovereignty of God is the Biblical teaching that God is the supreme authority (the superpower of the universe) and all things are under His control. God's sovereignty and providence means that He is superintending and orchestrating all the events in the world and universe, including the events associated with our personal lives.

Acts 15:18 declares:

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

This means that God knew all of His works prior to the commencement of the earth's creation in the sense that He had planned and purposed them to come to pass even within eternity past!

As you reflect on the sovereignty of God from all the above verses, what do you think could stop God's plans from being carried out in your life or in the life of someone you love? Remember that nothing can thwart God's eternal purposes from coming to pass in the lives of His people. He will accomplish everything that He has planned for their lives.

"God has measured time's duration,
Night and day are His creation.

And the changing seasons of the year;
He's the one who watches o'er me
And prepares the way before me
There is nothing now I need to fear.

God knows all about tomorrow
He can see beyond today;
Be it filled with joy or sorrow,
He has planned it that way.
So I do not fear the future,
On His promises I stand;
God knows all about tomorrow
For He holds it in His hand!"

As we have seen, there are many declarations of God's sovereignty in the Bible. None is clearer when God speaks through the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah 45:7, God gives us a bold declaration of His sovereignty:

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (*orchestrating and superintending all calamities, including war, natural disasters, and moral evil in the world*): I the LORD do all these things" (*as the sovereign God*).



God is not the author of sin (James 1:13) but He does providentially direct every event within this fallen world, including the various trials and ways associated with our lives, both good and bad. God has a path, plan, and purpose for each one of us and everything we pass through in this life is in some way ordained by an all-wise and loving God. Everything in some sense is under God's guidance and control. Yes,

even the dark and difficult times of our lives fall under the category of God's providence.

“What tho’ the way be lonely,
And dark the shadows fall;
I know where’er it leadeth,
My Father planned it all.

The sun may shine tomorrow,
The shadows break and flee;
‘Twill be the way He chooses,
The Father’s plan for me.

I sing thro’ the shade and sunshine,
I trust Him whate’er befall;
His way is best—it leads to rest;
My Father planned it all.”

It is true, God does as He pleases and purposes within the world and even with our own lives. So, there is the secret to living the Christian life: “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). We can rest in God’s sovereign and providential ways since He is an all-wise, loving, and merciful God who is in charge with everything that happens around me, with me, and in me! Take chance out of the picture and replace it with trust in God!

We can find our serenity, stillness, and security through our relationship with God (getting to know Him personally) and by accepting His sovereign ways over our lives. Beloved, believe in God’s purpose for your life, let God be God, and find rest for your soul. We should experience strength, reverence, security, freedom, and peace when we reflect on God’s awesome sovereignty and providence in the world and our lives.



By expressing faith in God’s wisdom and ways in the world and with my own life, I can find the rest I need for my Christian life. I must always KNOW that God is in charge and never makes any mistakes. We must KNOW that He is completely overruling everything,

including all the events of our lives. “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). When you have found this stillness or peace, you will have discovered the soft pillow of accepting God’s sovereignty and providential way over your life. How wonderful! You can experience, peace, release, security, and freedom when submitting to God’s sovereign way over your life, knowing that God operates on the basis of His perfect wisdom, love, mercy, and righteousness.

Charles Spurgeon said:

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

God’s heart is such that He can never relinquish His love for His children (Rom. 8:38-39).

“Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know;
Spirit, breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so.
Oh, this full and perfect peace!
Oh, this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.”

But Job 42:2 reminds us of God’s hand in the affairs of life:

“I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden (cut off) from thee.”

In other words, God perfectly governs the universe and whatever He purposes cannot be thwarted within the world and universe. Job learned this lesson during his life. Like Job, we must recognize that suffering is within the bounds of God’s sovereignty and providence (Job 1:6-2:6) and that all suffering has a definite purpose and ending.

In Job 23:10 he declared:

“But he knoweth the way that I take (*God’s providence*): when he hath tried me (*God’s pressure*), I shall come forth as gold” (*God’s purpose*).

“God never moves without purpose or plan.
When trying His servant and molding a man.

Give thanks to the LORD, though your testing seems long.
In darkness, He giveth a song.

O rejoice in the LORD,
He makes no mistake.
He knoweth the end of each path that I take!
For when I am tried and purified,
I shall come forth as gold.”